

# Field Test

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## Minelab X-Terra 30

The weather in January was not ideal for metal detecting. The biting cold winds and temperatures dropping down to minus two degrees in the morning, was enough to ensure that most people stayed indoors. However, the chance to check out the new X-Terra 30 - and put it through its paces - was far too tempting an offer to let something as trivial as a typical Siberian summer day get in the way.

The X-Terra 30 is the younger brother of the X-Terra 50, and comes with the same high build quality that I had come to expect from Minelab. The shaft is finished in a Dulux wineberry colour, and complements the fittings on the rest of the machine.

The control box keypads are laid out in a clever way so that they can be reached and adjusted with the thumb of the same hand that you are holding the machine with. Weighing in at just 2.9lb, including the four batteries, this machine won't leave you feeling exhausted at the end of a long day of detecting.

### Controls

The keypad lay out is as follows:-

**Power** - Self explanatory, turns the machine on and off.

**Patterns** - Allows you to choose which mode you want to run the machine in (All Metal or Discrimination).

**Menu Select** - From here you can select the Volume and Sensitivity displays.

**Accept/Reject** - For me this is the clever bit. You can accept or reject certain metals by turning on or off the individual discrimination segments. There are 12 segments ranging from -4 to 44 in steps of 4.

I found this very handy indeed I wanted to reject the ubiquitous shotgun caps on one of my farms. It worked a treat. Once I found one, I pressed the reject pad and an "X" appeared beside the digital display number for the cap; also the segment representing the cap stayed visible reminding me that I had discriminated against the

object. Another clever addition comes in the form of two large dots that will sometimes appear where the digital numbers are. We all know how hard it is to discriminate against ferrous objects, so if you sweep over a target and get a positive audio sound one way but no ID number except the two large dots, it will almost certainly be iron. Clever or what?

**Pinpoint** - Another very clever feature of the X-Terra 30 is the Pinpoint. When an object is located and the Pinpoint pad is selected it switches the machine to a non-motion mode. With the aid of an audio and visual display consisting of an outer circle and a segmented inner circle, pinpointing is child's play. As the target gets closer to the centre of the coil the inner segments start to fill in and the audio volume increases. Once the inner segments have come together and the volume is at its maximum the target is now beneath the centre of the coil.

**Plus & Minus Pads** - These two pads allow you to scroll through the discrimination segments as well as adjusting the volume and sensitivity settings on the machine.

Included in the LCD display you also have a battery icon, which tells you when the batteries need to be changed. There is also a Depth Indicator, which gives you an idea as to how deep the target is below the coil.

### Assembly

Assembly is as easy as it gets. Twistlocks on the two main shafts and a six-hole spring-loaded pin allow you to adjust the machine to suit your height. The control box is attached by a simple push fit into the end of the handle; this allows you to remove it easily and store it safely for transportation. The 9in concentric 7.5kHz coil is fixed using a plastic bolt and wing nut, while the cable is held tidy to the shaft with the aid of two Velcro tabs.

At the opposite end the armrest can be adjusted to suit different arm lengths - with four holes allowing enough movement - and there is a Velcro strap that can be fitted to suit both left and right-handed users.



The machine runs on 4 x AA batteries, which slot into the side of the control box. Access to the battery compartment is via a sliding door with the correct way to insert the batteries being shown on the control box cover. On the opposite side there is a connection for the headphones, which is sunken into the body and is protected by a push fit rubber door to stop dust, water, and debris from entering the connection when the headphones are not being used.

Along with a very easy to understand manual there is a comprehensive DVD. This covers nine chapters including a history of Minelab, VFLEX Technology explained, the Control Panel and what each button is used for, Pinpointing and Discrimination set up, and a chapter on detecting in the UK.

## Field Trials

It would have been an easy option for me to take the X-Terra 30 to some of my more productive fields, but instead I opted to try this new VFLEX technology on some of the fields that I had been avoiding due to the fact that they had been used in the past by the farmer as a dumpsite.

Two of the fields in particular were heavily infested with rubbish, and it was these fields on which I chose to carry out part of the test.

The X-Terra 30 can be run in two different modes. One is an all-metal mode, the other discrimination mode and selection is as simple as pressing the touchpad on the console-marked patterns to switch between the two. Both of these modes are accompanied by a visual display and an audio response. The target ID display numbers on the X-Terra 30 range from -4 to 44, with a detected object having one of the following 12 numbers: -4, 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 28, 32, 36, 40 or 44. The number -4 indicates a ferrous object while the other 11 a non-ferrous object.

As well as the ID numbers the X-Terra has an added advantage of three different tones - low, medium and high - to indicate the target's conductivity; a low tone for ferrous and a medium to high tone for non-ferrous.

For the first hour I ran the machine in the All Metal mode and dug every signal that read -4 to see if the machine was



Battery compartment.

Joe Cummins with the Minelab X-Terra 30.



The next few hours were spent running the machine in the discrimination mode. This was a very big plus for me so far as this machine was concerned. Being able to accept or reject targets at the press of a button made life very easy indeed, and also saved a lot of unnecessary junk digging.

Another part of the farm that I had been avoiding due to bullet shell cases was a small wood situated at the bottom of a steep field. This wood must have seen some Home Guard action during the Second World War as it is littered with discarded .303 cases.

To overcome this problem it was just a matter of finding one and then eliminating similar targets using the Accept/Reject button.

It was not long before I was finding some nice coins, the best of these being a cartwheel penny of George III and a Victoria sixpence dated 1883. To my amazement, in the same spot that I found the sixpence was a shell case but I had no indication that it was there until I unearthed it while digging for the indicated target.

To give some idea as to what the audio sounds and the digital readings might represent in the field I performed the following air test using items that I had found over the years.

giving an accurate reading. To my surprise every reading was correct. I also picked up two very nice buckles, a musket ball, a bag seal, and a pound coin - all giving very positive audio and target ID numbers.

The good finds all had a solid lock-on meter reading, with a medium to high tone. The bad targets were identified by a low tone, an erratic meter reading, and a display of -4. Having both an audio and visual display that I could trust was really saving me time and a lot of unnecessary digging. Although the machine has a fixed ground balance, I found that reducing the sensitivity stabilised the machine so that I did not mask out the good signals.



A selection of the artefacts found during the Field Test.



Listed below are my findings. I performed this test in the All Metal mode with a new set of batteries and with the sensitivity set at 7.

Target	ID Number	Tone
Large bag seal	32	High
Toy cannon	36	High
Lead token	24	Medium
Small Roman silver	28	Medium
Small Roman bronze	16	Medium
Large Roman bronze	36	Medium
Gold sovereign	28	Medium
George III halfpenny	36	High
Half-ounce weight	36	High
James I hammered	24	Medium
Victoria shilling	40	High
Victoria penny	28	High
William III shilling	36	High
George III halfpenny	36	High
Crotal bell	32	High

By now it was half term and the weather had improved. We at last had blue sky but the biting cold wind was still here. My six-year-old daughter Lily had been pestering me for a day out by the seaside, so this was a great opportunity to try out the X-Terra 30 on sand. One of my work colleagues lives in Rye in East Sussex and he suggested we go to Camber Sands. Apparently it gets very busy in the summer, so the chance to winkle out a few coins from between the dunes and keep my daughter happy at the same

time looked good.

It turned out that the day we picked to go was one of the better days that we had for a while with a lovely blue sky and light breeze coming off the sea. As a compromise I agreed only to do an hour's detecting. It was, after all, supposed to be a family day out, so while my wife and daughter went off to explore the beach I got on with the task in hand.

Once again, I started off in the All Metal Mode and - although the machine was coping really well - I switched over to Pattern 1, which meant I could blank out the beer bottle caps, ring pulls, and foil that was all over the place.

It was not long before I had about five kids in tow and I felt like the Pied Piper as I weaved my way along the beach. Having the kids tag along was great but stopping every few yards to answer a question was using up my hour. However, shaking them off was not going to be easy. The look on their faces when I found my first coin after about 10 minutes was pure magic.

I have to say at this point that I would not class myself as an expert beach detectorist but the X-Terra 30 was making it very easy indeed for me. The Pattern 1 setting was working a treat and after 30 minutes or so I was up £2.20 in modern coins from a very small area of the beach.

Working my way down to where I could see my wife and daughter collect-

ing shells I managed to find another £1.40, giving me a total of £3.60 in spendable money. I felt that this was not bad for an hour on a beach with a new machine. Being able to reject the junk was a great advantage and I know that if I had spent another few hours detecting I would have found a lot more coins.

The machine performed better than I had expected in that it could seem to handle wet sand. Even with the sensitivity set at 7 the X-Terra 30 seemed to be at home on beach conditions.

### Conclusion

If you are reading this and thinking about buying a metal detector for the first time, or if indeed you are simply looking for a good back-up machine then you should consider the X-Terra 30.

Before I started to do this field test report I made my mind up that I was going to be frank with the results, and if there was something I did not like about the machine I was going to express my reason why I did not like it.

From the moment I started to use this machine I felt confident with it, and to me if you have confidence in your machine it can only lead to better things.

Over the five weeks or so that I had been using the machine my good finds rate went up. I have to put this down to the excellent discrimination ability of the machine and its positive ID capabilities (using tone and digital) against the old

enemy iron. The only iron to slip through the net was the large pieces, which I have to say the majority of machines would indicate as a good signal.

My good finds included: crotal bells, bag seals, a lead token, some very nice Victoria coins, musket balls, buckles, buttons, a jetton, a cartwheel penny, a Ghana 2 shilling piece (I have no idea how that found its way into the field), and decimal coins.

The fact that the machine is easy to understand and set up is a big plus for the X-Terra. It's not an over-complicated machine with a lot of functions that are not needed when all you want to do is go and enjoy yourself without having to have a degree in engineering to do so.

You don't need to spend hours reading a manual to have a lot of fun with this detector. In fact, all you have to do is turn



Joe with daughter Lily.

it on and leave the rest to the machine....it's as simple as that.

The three audio tones combined with the digital reading means you will dig less junk unless, that is, you happen to like digging up rubbish.

Another very good point about the X-Terra 30 is its running costs. Using a set of headphones with the machine will give you approximately 25 hours use. Another

clever idea from Minelab is that when the batteries are getting low and you are not using headphones the speaker volume will be reduced to save battery life so that you can detect for longer.

Whether you are going to spend a few hours detecting or you are into long rally marathons, at the end of the day the 2.9lb (including batteries) that the machine weighs will not be a problem. It's also a very well balanced machine, which can be a great help when you are detecting over uneven ground.

After having the machine now for five weeks I can say with hand on heart that the only fault I have found (if you could even call it a fault) is that the arm bracket stand needs to be wider. The detector tends to topple over when you put it down on ploughed ground, although it's fine on pasture. **TH**